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PROGRAM AND SERVICES FOR RETURNING
SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN

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From its inception, USO has been guided by the principle that its program to be vital and meaningful, needs constantly to be adjusted to meet new situations and new needs of members of the armed forces. The early program of USO established shortly after universal conscription became effective has been constantly adapted to meet the greater demands on USO program created by the rapid expansion of the armed forces. A second development to which USO is adapting is now taking place wherein the armed forces are changing from an army in training to an army in combat.

Today American servicemen are dispersed throughout eighty-two different combat zones. Casualties from battle fronts have been returning to the United States since Pearl Harbor in a slow but steady stream. More than fifteen thousand combat casualties have already been discharged from the services. Present indications point to a rapid, perhaps climactic intensification of the conflict with millions more of American servicemen involved in combat operations overseas. Men who have seen action in Africa, Sicily, Italy, the Aleutians and the South Pacific have been returned to the United States and are coming to USO Clubs.

The present bulletin describes the most effective approach for USO workers in relating USO program to the needs of returning servicemen and women. Because of limited program experience in this area it is necessarily not primarily composed of specific suggestions. It will be most valuable when used as a guide to help establish correct methods and procedures.

It is concerned with:

- I. Identification of returned servicemen and women.
- II. Functions of USO in serving returned servicemen and women.
 1. Cooperation with military authorities
 2. Providing established USO program to meet specific needs of returning men and women
 3. Assistance in conditioning local community to normal acceptance of returned servicemen and women
 4. Integrating servicemen and women into the civilian community
- III. Program Planning to meet needs of returning servicemen and women.
 1. Consultation with military authorities
 2. Program suggestions
 3. Community resources and cooperation with other agencies
 4. Staff training
 5. Volunteer training

I. Men are Being Sent Back to the United States

CASUALTIES - Many of the men who have returned to the United States from active duty in combat zones have been brought back because of wounds received in action, that require protracted hospitalization and rehabilitation, because of illness, or because they suffer from neuro-psychiatric disturbances.

TASK FORCES - Detachments of Marines, Army units and other task forces are at times returned to the United States after they have completed their special missions; Navy personnel who are on furlough or are being reassigned from ships which have returned to the United States after combat.

CASUALS - A proportionately small group who because of the extent and severity of their combat duty are given an extended furlough or are sent back to the United States for rest and reassignment. (Airplane crews are an example). The overseas commander determines when an individual should be returned to the United States. The rotation of whole units with a definite time limit for overseas duty is regarded as impossible because of insurmountable shipping difficulties.

Returning servicemen and women are coming to USO:

1. On furlough.
2. On sick leave.
3. On leave from AAF Distribution Centers.
4. In off-duty time from military posts in United States to which they have been reassigned.
5. During shore leave from ships and naval posts.
6. Ambulatory cases when USO is near a hospital.
7. After discharge from the service while still in uniform or in civilian dress.

II. Functions of USO in Serving Returned Servicemen and Women

It is the function of USO to meet those needs of the returned servicemen which can be served through the resources and techniques at its disposal in accordance with its established program. On the whole, returned servicemen will be served most effectively when the total program is responsive to their needs and interests and they are absorbed into it on the same basis as the men in training and other constituents. Program developed along these lines will be directed toward helping the returned servicemen reestablish normal, healthy social relationships. It will carefully avoid any expression of the inherent tendency to focus unduly or negatively on any difficulties which these men may have in adjusting. Any attempt to develop segregated activities for returned men should be discouraged. (An exception would be made in cases where hospital authorities might request special programs having specific purposes in mind).

The four main functions of USO in serving returning servicemen and women are:

1. To Provide its Regular Program of Activities and Services to Returned Servicemen and Women with a Definite Concern for their Specific Needs and Interests.

The general objective is to help the returned servicemen and women re-establish healthy, normal and satisfying social relationships. As more experience is gained in dealing with their needs it will become increas-

ingly possible to support this general objective with more specific objectives. Some can, however, be stated as suggested guides:

- a. To help them feel that their essential personality has not been impaired.
- b. To help them feel that society places great value upon them as individuals, -- not only as heroes who have made a great contribution to the nation's welfare, but because as individuals they are accepted and liked and because their individuality is enjoyed by others in normal social intercourse.
- c. To help them achieve a greater understanding of the things for which they are fighting and to affirm for themselves the worthwhileness of the part which they are playing.
- d. To help them feel that they are needed and that they have a worthwhile contribution to make in the war effort and in civilian society.
- e. To help them develop confidence in themselves that will enable them to face obstacles and reestablish the goals of their personal lives.

The achievement of objectives is a process. Objectives are reached through seemingly remote beginnings with simple but effective activities and relationships. A sightless man who is successfully learning to manage a cup of coffee for himself and to enjoy conversation with friends in the USO Club is facing the challenge of the difficulties before him. The confidence which he develops in doing so successfully will enable him to face greater challenges outside of the USO Club with equal success. The man whose abilities are recognized by others through his participation in events and activities begins to reaffirm the value of his own personality through the value placed upon it by others. The professional and volunteer worker must see that this process takes place through:

1. Activities
 2. Services
 3. Setting and atmosphere
 4. Relationships of people to each other.
2. To Provide Assistance in Conditioning Local Community to a Normal Acceptance of Returned Servicemen and Women.

In most communities USO shares this function with a number of agencies. In some communities USO may be the only agency to undertake such responsibility. In either case the experience which USO has gained in working with members of the armed forces will be helpful in accomplishing the following:

- a. Interpreting the needs of returned men.
- b. Helping civilians in the community develop realistic and understanding attitudes toward the needs of returned men.

Community attitudes will have considerable effect upon the returning servicemen. It is well to hold in mind that many of them have been overseas in battle areas for long periods of time and that the American home front is more remote from actual war conditions than the home fronts of other countries. The "sense of difference and separation" which many feel upon returning, may be expressed in questions about: Rationing, industrial conditions, prices and other changed conditions. Such questions not only express a desire for information but often reflect a feeling of isolation or separation from civilian life. An unquestioning acceptance of these men by the community will do much to put them at ease and provide them with the opportunity to reestablish normal satisfying social relationships. Such an attitude on the part of the community cannot be taken for granted for there is little in the experience of most communities or individuals that would make it possible for them to develop understanding and constructive attitudes toward such problems. This will be particularly true in communities near Amputation Centers and Plastic Centers.

3. To Assist in the Integration of Returned Servicemen in Normal Community Life.

In this function as in the one discussed above, USO generally will be working in close cooperation with other agencies. The community which has been conditioned to anticipate returning servicemen through a realistic understanding of their needs will be better able to provide opportunities whereby the men can achieve real integration in community life. In many situations these men are stationed in a particular community for a long period of time. Some of them are ambulatory hospital cases but are about to be discharged or are reassigned to duty. The way in which these men are accepted in the community, its churches, its homes and social activities is part of the process of integration. Even though this may be a temporary and incomplete experience with many men, its value is unquestionably great. For those who are about to be discharged it is a step which will make their homecoming and their absorption into civilian life easier. It is in itself the beginning of readjustment to civilian life and may avoid some difficulties which may attend sudden and disturbing change.

Discharged Servicemen. THE SERVICES WHICH USO CAN RENDER THE DISCHARGED SERVICEMAN MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARD FURTHERING HIS READJUSTMENT TO CIVILIAN LIFE. Discharged men are entitled to participate in all USO activities and services and they should be welcomed with the same spirit with which men on active duty are received. However, they will be served best when they are assisted in reestablishing satisfactory relationships in civilian community activities. Therefore USO functions regarding discharged servicemen are:

- a. Information Service. It should be possible for discharged servicemen to receive information in a USO club regarding National, State and local agencies serving their needs in vocational training, continuance of education, family problems, job placement, veterans' benefits, etc. Such information is also made available by the military authorities and Red Cross.

For discharged men and those about to be discharged, information on services and benefits which they can receive from governmental and private agencies will provide encouragement for their return to civilian life. Not only does this information describe real opportunities for them to reestablish their civilian lives and profit by the use of personal initiative; it may also instill confidence by indicating to them that their welfare is a real concern of the nation.

- b. Counseling and Case Work Services. In many instances, USO workers will be called upon to assist individuals as they work out plans to return to civilian life. Many of the returning men and women who come to the USO locally will be strangers in the community, or non-residents. Helping non-residents with their personal problems requires a high degree of interviewing skills, rapid evaluation of individual's social situation, and use of all possible resources which may be available to carry out a social treatment plan. Travelers Aid workers are especially trained to give this type of service and are in a position to accept responsibility for assistance to people who find themselves in difficulty while away from home. Therefore, returning servicemen and women who need help with personal problems, including financial assistance or other specialized services provided by Travelers Aid, should be referred to the USO Travelers Aid Service or to a local Travelers Aid Society if there is one in the community.
- c. Referrals. Where USO is functioning in communities in which there are civilian agencies equipped to give needed information, guidance, or other individual services, they should be utilized and proper referral procedures established.

In many cases, it will be important not only to give information but to help a person establish effective relationships with another agency. USO staff members should have information regarding the function of other agencies in the local community and should agree upon the most effective referral procedures to be used. In many communities, the civilian member agencies of USO may be particularly helpful to assist returning servicemen and women to reestablish civilian contacts.

Primary responsibility for meeting the needs of discharged servicemen rests with the local communities and those agencies established for that specific purpose. In some communities, where there is no established local agency able to do so, USO may perform a valuable service in bringing to the attention of the community the need to **organize** its resource to meet specific needs of discharged servicemen. Segregated activities for discharged men that help to maintain their identification with military life for an indefinite period and thus hinder their acceptance of civilian values and goals should be carefully avoided.

- 4. To Cooperate with Military Authorities in Meeting Needs of Returned Servicemen and Servicewomen.

The development of the USO program nationally and locally has been assist-

ed by continued consultation with military authorities. It is important that consultation be maintained locally regarding USO's part in meeting the needs of returned servicemen. Where possible, it should be established on a regular basis as the practice now is in many areas. It is aimed at discovering what adaptations in the regular program are advisable, what needs of the returning servicemen can best be served by USO and information about the personnel, as the needs of the men in an AAF Redistribution Center may be different from those of the men on leave from a hospital. In some cases daytime programs have been suggested because many ambulatory men may be free to visit in the community during the day. In other instances requests have been made to obtain the use of swimming pools and other facilities or to arrange special programs. It should be clearly understood that USO's concern for the needs of the returned servicemen implies no departure from the established USO program.

III. Program Planning for Returned Servicemen

As far as possible plans aimed at meeting the needs of returning servicemen should be developed on a staff conference and community-wide basis. The particular abilities of staff members should be kept in mind and when possible they should be employed for the benefit of the total program. Consideration in planning should be given to the following:

1. Consultation with military authorities
2. How to develop the program utilizing all USO resources
3. Community resources and other agencies
4. Staff training
5. Volunteer training

1. Consultation with Military Authorities.

Contact with military authorities should be made with reference to the participation of all USO operations in the local program. This contact and consultation should extend to chaplains, rehabilitation officers, military psychiatrists and other members of the medical staff and of the American Red Cross.

2. Program Suggestions.

Men who have been overseas, facing crucial hardships in combat far from their homes, often respond most favorably to simple things. A home-like, comfortable and cheerful atmosphere in the club is essential. Such surroundings, in contrast to the experiences from which they have recently come, may help to induce feelings of ease and security. USO workers report that "men who have been overseas are more inclined to use the club as they would their homes".

- a. The activities which are available should be varied and permit greater individualization.
- b. Most men who have been in combat overseas have experienced the strong friendship and feeling of belonging to a group such as: a Fortress crew, a tank crew, a group of scouts, or a gun crew,

that has shared hardship and danger. The USO club and particularly its activities can help them to develop substitute relationships, in groups and with individuals.

- c. More concern for the interests of one, two and three men in any activity is justified.
- d. Where one leader of the arts and crafts activity or other activities was formerly adequate, it may now be advisable to enlist two or three more.
- e. A number of reports indicate a desire on the part of these men to "do things for themselves" and to "take part in the running of the program".
- f. Attention should be given to learning more about their particular interest. There are indications that they are adverse to the "jitterbug" variety of events, that they like to spend time in relaxed conversation with individuals, mostly older men, women or girls. Many references have been made to their interest in changes which have taken place in communities since their absence and their concern with post war conditions.
- g. New and customary activities should be considered in the light of these and other interests.
- h. Participation is likely to increase when the techniques of exposure and demonstration are used informally in reading rooms, lounges and other places where the men gather.

Services. All services must be rendered in terms of a basic understanding of the needs of the returned men. This applies as much to incidental services as it does to those that are more important. Methods of rendering services which involve a number of different USO workers or other agencies should be worked out and thoroughly understood in advance. Personal services should be discussed in the staff conferences and planned for on a common basis with regard for the special functions of the Travelers Aid.

In communities near general hospitals, USO can render to the families of visiting men in the hospital services such as:

- 1. Location of rooms.
- 2. Care of children during visits to hospitals.
- 3. Assistance or information on how to get to camp.
- 4. Help in adjustment to facing new problems.
- 5. Referrals to sources of information on compensation, veterans' benefits, vocational guidance, job placement, etc.

Other such services for servicemen themselves may include:

- 1. Conveying messages.
- 2. Assistance to Chaplains in securing civilian religious advisors when requested.
- 3. Providing home hospitality on a selective basis

The particular skills of staff members should be utilized with reference to the functions of:

1. American Red Cross
2. Chaplains
3. Rehabilitation Officers
4. Medical Staff
5. Veterans Bureau
6. Civilian religious leaders
7. Social workers

Counseling on spiritual problems will be a matter for particular concern to USO. It will be necessary to face the limitations of professional workers who do not have special training and skills for such functions. It is important that recognition is given to the fact that many individual problems can be resolved only by the assistance of specially trained personnel and that an attempt to assist in some cases by untrained personnel may be harmful.

3. Community Resources and Other Agencies.

The utilization of community resources and the development of procedures with other agencies should be approached on a staff conference basis. After an understanding has been reached in the staff conference regarding the types of problems to be referred to other persons, federal, state agencies, private agencies, military medical staffs, chaplains, Red Cross or others, referral procedures should be agreed upon with these persons and agencies. It is therefore essential that the functions and services of other agencies be clearly understood. Participation by USO in community wide committees and councils concerned with developing a coordinated local program for the benefit of returning servicemen should be offered. In some cases it may be advisable for USO to bring to the attention of the community through the USO Council, the need for such organizations. Coordination should be directed toward a full use of resources, the avoidance of duplication, clearance of information, and the elimination of unnecessary or unproductive contacts with agencies by servicemen.

The number and variety of agencies in each community will, of course, vary. The agencies listed below are concerned with discharged servicemen and women:

- a. Reemployment Committeeman attached to every Local Selective Service Board.
- b. Army Emergency Relief.
- c. Navy Relief.
- d. United States Employment Service.
- e. The Veterans' Administration .
- f. The Vocational Rehabilitation and Training Division of the

Federal Security Agency, which operates under the State Department of Education in each individual State.

- g. Information concerning Federal employment - may be obtained at any Post Office of any Civil Service Office.
- h. The civilian member agencies of USO and other similar community agencies.

Note: See attached outline of functions and services of some of the agencies listed above.

4. Staff Training.

The Staff Conference should give consideration to setting up a program of staff training aimed at achieving increased understanding of the needs of returned men and the improvement of staff members' skills in meeting these needs. The following suggestions should be included for study:

- a. The general and specific needs of returned servicemen.
- b. Program objectives related to needs.
- c. The functions of other agencies.
- d. Identification of types of problems which require referral.
- e. Referral procedures and techniques.

Assistance in organizing and conducting in-service training in the Staff Conference may be obtained by calling on staff members with special skills, military officials, Red Cross and local religious and educational leaders and other professional workers with the necessary experience and skill.

5. Volunteer Training.

Volunteers must be carefully trained with regard to the new relationship with returned servicemen which they may have. Careful selection should exclude those who are emotionally unsuited to such relationships. Older and more mature volunteers may be best suited to assist in certain phases of the program although younger persons carefully selected and well trained, can render equally important services. Trained leaders of small group activities will be particularly valuable. Reports indicate that veterans of the last war who have made successful adjustments in civilian life are generally good volunteers. Volunteer training should be based upon the following:

- a. Sound concepts of mental hygiene.
- b. Recognition of the limitations of the untrained persons in dealing with complex personal problems.
- c. The functions of USO and objectives of the program.
- d. Functions of other agencies and professional workers.
- e. Functions and contributions of volunteers.

As previously stated, it should be clearly indicated that USO's concern for returned servicemen implies no departure in its established program but represents a desire to utilize this program to meet needs of returning men.

NOTE: The material included should be read and used for discussion and study material in the Staff Conference:

1. "Psychiatric Toll of Warfare," reprint from Fortune Magazine, December 1943.
2. "Understanding People in Wartime" (National Travelers Aid Association).
3. Rehabilitation of Disabled Soldiers (O.W.I.)

Recommended by:

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